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The President's Daily Brief

22 March 1972

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

22 March 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Soviets

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. *(Page 1)*

In Laos, the Communists yesterday captured another strongpoint on Skyline Ridge, but the irregulars have now launched a counterattack. *(Page 2)*

The North Vietnamese appear to be working on two more airfields in the southern part of North Vietnam. *(Page 3)*

Guatemala

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(Page 4)

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USSR

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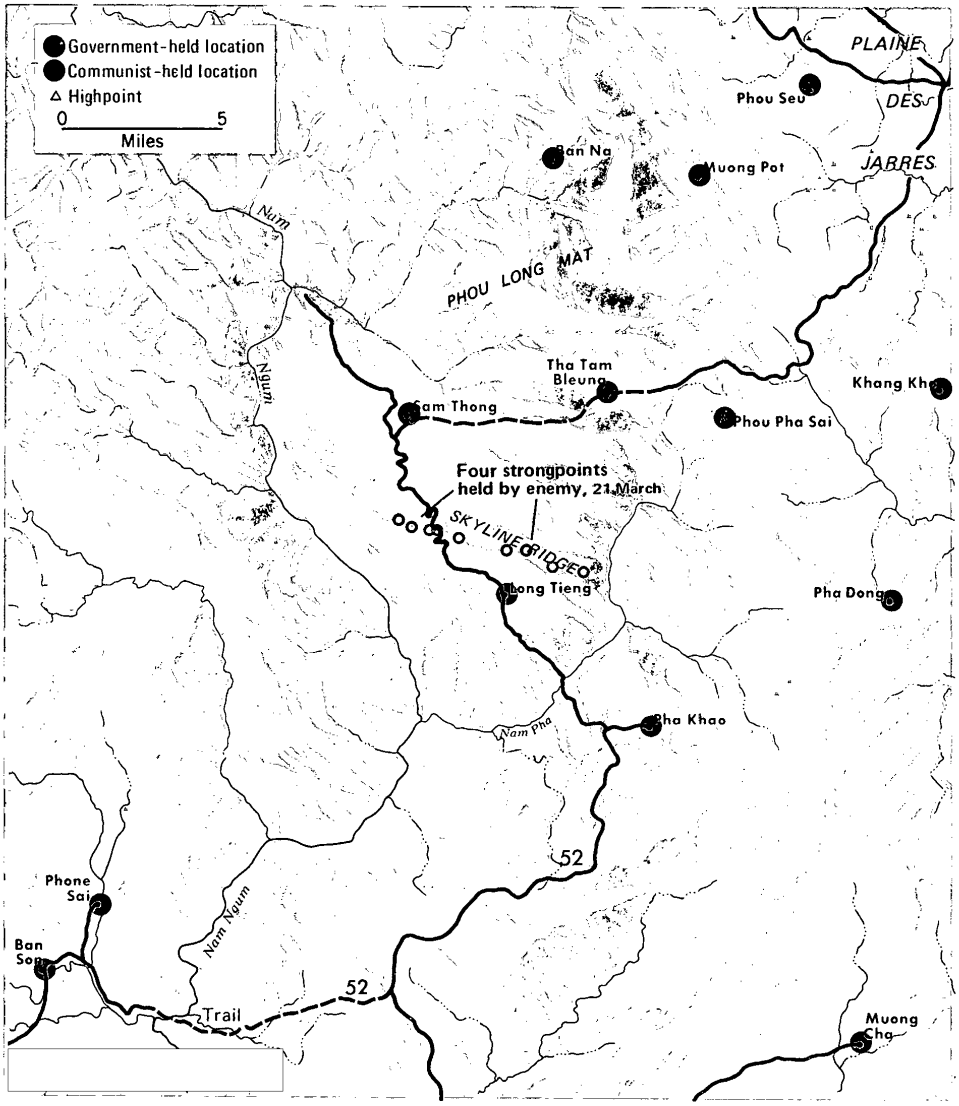
LONG TIENG AREA



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LAOS

North Vietnamese troops drove irregulars from another position on the western end of Skyline Ridge yesterday. As of today, the Communists are reported to hold two strongpoints on the far west of the ridge, the government still holds five, and two are unoccupied. The irregulars have launched a counter-attack to prevent the North Vietnamese from using their toehold on the ridge to cover an advance by Communist troops and tanks from the Sam Thong area. Aerial observers have already spotted tank tracks north of the ridge.

The 1,400 Thai and 400 Lao irregulars defending Skyline in the week-long battle have been fighting with considerable tenacity, but it is questionable whether they can hold on indefinitely without major reinforcements. Heavy enemy fire on the Long Tieng airstrip has so far prevented Vang Pao from moving two fresh battalions into the area.

The Communists too may be hurting from the protracted heavy fighting.

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The two irregular forces operating north and east of the Plaine des Jarres are still encountering only light resistance as they advance toward positions from which to harass Communist lines of communication.

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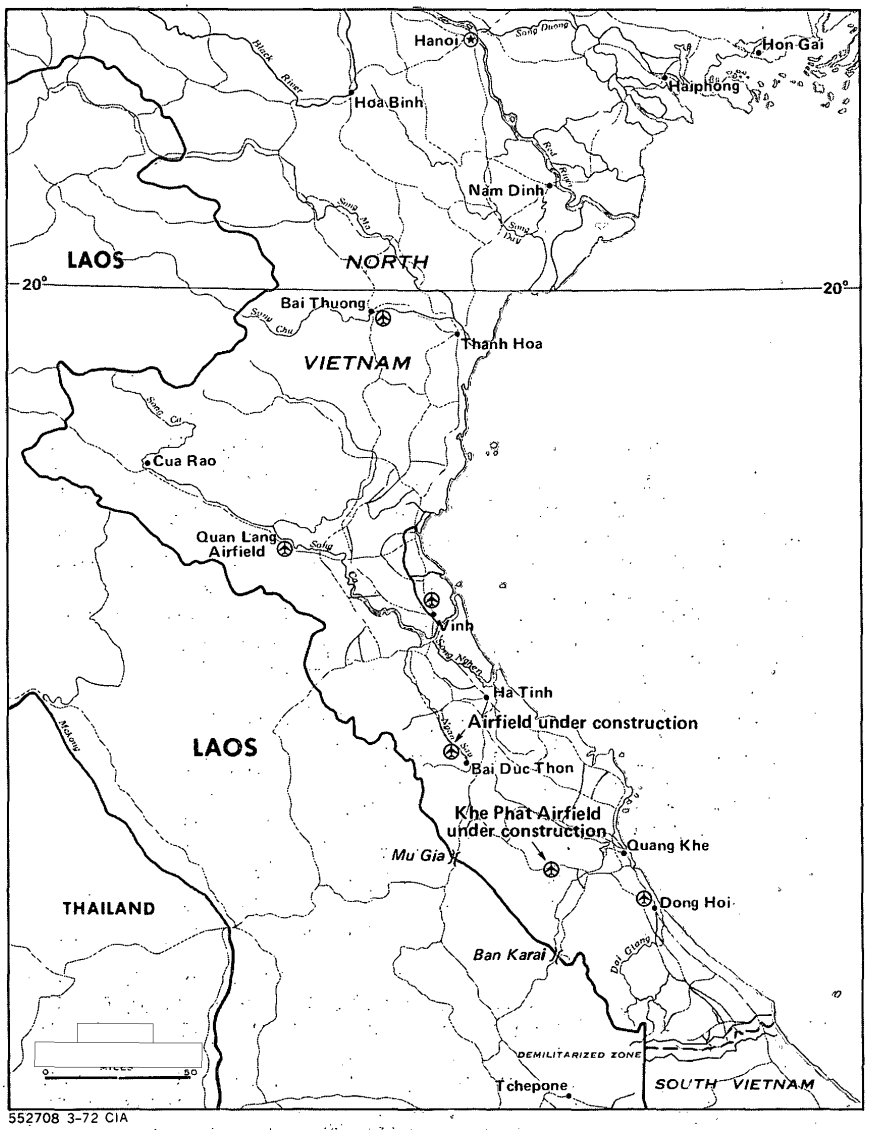

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NORTH VIETNAM

Hanoi appears to be building two additional airfields in the southern region of North Vietnam. Photography of mid-March shows what looks like construction of a field near the town of Bai Duc Thon. Although the runway is still in an early stage of construction and only 3,800 feet long, it could easily be extended. Earlier this year the North Vietnamese also had begun work on an airfield at Khe Phat. Recent photography shows that one third of the 5,600-foot runway under construction there has now been surfaced.

The relatively rapid pace of construction at these airfields suggests that Hanoi is preparing for a much higher level of air operations during the next few months. When the two fields are completed this summer the North Vietnamese will have a total of six fields south of the 20th parallel capable of handling jet aircraft.

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GUATEMALA [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

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NOTE

Cyprus: Following conversations with Cypriot officials, UN representatives on Cyprus say they expect the Makarios government to agree soon to tighter UN controls over the Czech arms. The Cypriots responded favorably to the suggestion of establishing a UN presence at the armory where the weapons are being stored and for the removal of the firing pins to another city. Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots continue to insist, however, that all of the arms be turned over to the UN force, and are threatening otherwise to import an equivalent quantity of arms for the Turkish Cypriots.

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